meet realistic need of the farmers. A package providing for restructuring debts of farmers in distress and in arrears has been put in to operation that provide rescheduling of outstanding loans.

Statement

Annual Growth Rate of GDP at constant (1993-94) prices—agriculture, forestry and fishing sectors.

Year	Annual growth rate of GDP in agriculture, forestry and fishing sector, at constant (1993-04) prices.
1993-94	
1994-95	5.0
1995-96	-0.9
1996-97	9.6
1997-98	-2.4
1998-99	6.2
1999-2000	0.3
2000-01	-0.1
2001-02	6.3
2002-03	-7.0
2003-04	9.6
2004-05	1.1

Use of plastic in agricultural activities

2587. SHRI SHAHID SIDDIQUI: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have recommended the use of plastic in agricultural activities, if so, the justification for this recommendation; and

(b) whether any study has been done on the alternatives to plastic, if so, the details thereof showing the comparative cost-benefit ratio?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTI LAL BHURIA): (a) Plastics material is used in the following applications in the agriculture which are being promoted through Centrally Sponsored Schemes:

- Drip irrigation
- Sprinkler irrigation
- Green house/Low Tunnels
- Mulching
- Plastic Crates

The above applications helps in achieving increase in yields, water saving, better quality produce, raising crops in extreme climatic conditions. The use of plastic crates for carrying fruits & vegetables not only facilities transportation while maintaining the quality of produce but also saves forests to a larger extent which would have been otherwise cut to produce wooden boxes to carry fruits & vegetables.

(b) Plastics materials have been developed as an alternative to limited conventional resources viz wood, paper, jute etc. as well as for ecological balance and environment protection. Studies have been carried out to produce biodegradable plastic material for use in agriculture applications viz mulching. However, such material is costlier than the conventional plastic material.

Gram Panchayat as unit under crop insurance scheme

†2588. SHRI SURENDRA LATH: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the farmers of the country have requested Government to consider Gram Panchayat as unit instead of Block under crop insurance scheme so that farmers could get insurance on damage of crops in entire Panchayat, due to natural calamity;

(b) if so, the steps taken by Government in this regard and the outcome thereof; and

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.